

OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS
OF THE
SIXTH VA. VOL. INFANTRY.

Having been appointed your *Surgeon*, and bearing in mind that it is the number of *Bayonets* in the *field*, and not *Names* on the *Muster Roll*, is the strength of an Army, I come among you to give such advice for your *Camp Life* as may best preserve your health and promote your efficiency, to secure which the observance of the following rules are necessary and will be required:

1. Except when impossible for military reasons, the site of a camp should be selected for the dryness of its soil, its proximity to fresh water of good quality, and shelter from high winds. It should be on a slight declivity, in order to facilitate drainage, and not in the vicinity of swamps or stagnant water.

2. A trench, at least eight inches deep, should be dug around each tent, to secure dryness, and these should lead into other and deeper main drains or gutters, by which the water will be conducted away from the tents.

3. Sleeping upon the damp ground causes dysentery and fevers. A tarpaulin or India rubber cloth is a good protection; straw or hay is desirable, when fresh and frequently renewed; fresh hemlock, pine, or cedar boughs make a healthy bed. When occupied for any time, a flooring of planks should be secured for the tents, if possible, but this must be taken up, and the earth exposed to the sun, at least every week.

4. The tents for the men should be placed as far from each other as the "Regulations" and the dimensions of the camp permit, (never less than two paces;) crowding is always injurious to health, (Regulations, p. 508.) No refuse, slops, or excrement should be allowed to be deposited in the trenches for drainage around the tents. Each tent should be thoroughly swept out daily, and the materials used for bedding aired and sunned, if possible; the canvas should be raised freely at its base, and it should be kept open as much as possible during the day-time, in dry weather, in order to secure ventilation, for tents are liable to become very unhealthy if not constantly and thoroughly aired.

5. Free ventilation should also be secured at night, by opening and raising the base of the tent to as great an extent as the weather will permit.

6. The crowding of men in tents for sleeping is highly injurious to health, and will always be prevented by a commanding officer who is anxious for the welfare of his men. Experience has proved that sleeping beneath simple sheds of canvas, or even in the open air, is less dangerous to health than over-crowding in tents.

7. No more than five men should ever be allowed to sleep in a common army tent of the kind most commonly in use.

8. The men should sleep in their shirts and drawers, removing the shoes, stockings, and outer clothing, except when absolutely impracticable. Sleeping in the clothes is never so refreshing, and is absolutely unhealthy.

9. The men should never be allowed to sleep in wet clothing, or under a wet blanket, if it can be possibly avoided; and, after being wetted, all articles of clothing and blankets should be thoroughly dried and sunned before being used. After a thorough wetting there is no serious danger as long as the body is kept in motion; but the wet clothes should be replaced by dry shirt and drawers before sleeping; otherwise there is danger of taking cold, and of other grave forms of disease. If the men are deficient in the necessary supply of clothing for a change, the surgeon should report the fact to the commanding officer.

10. Camp fires should be allowed whenever admissible; they are useful for purifying the air, for preventing annoyance from insects, for drying clothing, and for security against chilliness during the night.

11. The underclothing should be washed and thoroughly dried once a week.

The men should bathe, or wash the whole body with water, at least once a week, and oftener when practicable, but the feet should be bathed daily, and the stockings washed whenever soiled.

12. The hair and beard should be closely cropped. If vermin make their appearance, apply promptly to the surgeon for means to destroy them. Extra soap may be procured on recommendation of the surgeon.

13. "Bread and soup are the great items of a soldier's diet in every situation; to make them well is therefore an essential part of his instruction. Those great scourges of a camp life, the scurvy and diarrhoea, more frequently result from a want of skill in cooking than from the badness of the rations, or from any other cause whatever. Officers in command, and more immediately, regimental officers, will therefore give a strict attention to this vital branch of interior economy."—(Winfield Scott.)

14. The best mode of cooking fresh meat is to make a stew of it, with the addition of such vegetables as can be obtained. It may also be boiled; but roasting, broiling, or frying, in camp, are wasteful and unhealthy modes of cooking.

15. "In camp or barracks the company officers must visit the kitchen daily, and inspect the kettles. The commanding officer of the post or regiment will make frequent inspections of the kitchens and messes. The greatest care will be observed in washing and scouring the cooking utensils; those made of brass or copper should be lined with tin. The bread must be thoroughly baked, and not eaten until it is cold. The soup must be boiled at least five hours, and the vegetables always cooked sufficiently to be perfectly soft and digestible."

16. Water should be always drunk in moderation, especially when the body is heated. Experience teaches the old soldier that the less he drinks when on a march the better, and that he suffers less in the end by controlling the desire to drink, however urgent.

17. There is no more frequent source of disease, in camp life, than inattention to the calls of nature. Habitual neglect of nature's wants will certainly lead to disease and suffering. A trench should always be dug, and provided with a pole, supported by uprights, at a properly selected spot at a moderate distance from camp, as soon as the locality of the latter has been determined upon; one should be provided for the officers and another for the men. The strictest discipline in regard to the performance of these duties is absolutely essential to health, as well as to decency. Men should never be allowed to void their excrement elsewhere than in the regularly established sinks. In a well regulated camp the sinks are visited daily by a police party, and a layer of earth thrown in, and lime and other disinfecting agents employed to prevent them from becoming offensive and unhealthy.

18. It is the immediate duty of non-commissioned officers in command of squads to see that these, and all other precautions required for the health of the men, are strictly carried out under the orders of the company and medical officers.

Aug. 25, 1862. G. A. S.

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Surgeon 6th Reg. Va.

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